Central American
NEWSLETTER

Newsletter of the Central American Group of the Spanish Main Society.
Editor: Michael P. Birks, 36 Trevor Road, Flixton, URMSTON, Manchester M41 5QH. England. 0161-747 5924.

Vol.III, No.58 January 1995

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The **Central American Group** is a part of the **Spanish Main Philatelic Society,** the leading Society in the world for collectors of Latin America. The journal of the SMPS is *The Mainsheet*, published quarterly, and is available by annual subscription from the Secretary, Brian Moorhouse, PO Box 105, PETERBOROUGH PE3 8TQ, England. Phone 01733 2687078. Subscription is currently £8 in Europe or $20 elsewhere. Cheques in sterling of US$ should be made payable to "The Spanish Main". A three year subscription of £21/$54 and a five year subscription of £30/$80 are available and payment for these longer subscriptions may be made by Access, Mastercard or Visa.

The **Central American Group** caters for the collectors of Mexico to Panama. Its journal, which you are now reading, is published quarterly, and is available by annual subscription. The subscription is currently £5 in Europe or £7 elsewhere. Cheques in sterling payable to "The CA Group" should be sent to the treasurer, David Hankey, 2 Prince's Drive, Marple, STOCKPORT SK6 6NJ, England. Phone 061-449 0693. We shall be pleased to forward the relevant portions of multi-subscription cheques to the SMPS or the Chile Group.

Back issues are available to members at 75p/$1.50 each, although issues 1-20 inclusive can be purchased for £10/$20 complete. Non-members may request a sample copy for 75p/$1.50 post paid. Requests for back issues should be sent the the Editor, to whom cheques should be made payable.

The group leader is Richard Saundry, Gwrych Cottage, Godstone Road, Bletchingley, REDHILL RH1 4PL, Surrey, England. Phone 01883 742186.

The group does not run a packet. The SMPS Packet Secretary is Brian Sylvester, 3 Russell Court, St Lukes Road, MAIDENHEAD SL6 7AP Berkshire, England. Phone 01628 784555.

Although most packets are of a general nature, there are occasional specialised one country packets. Good and unusual material is always wanted.

Owing to insurance difficulties, the packet is not available to overseas members, although we shall be pleased to accept material for inclusion from them.

The auctioneer of the SMPS is Brian Moorhouse, to whom Auction and Private Treaty lots should be sent. Brian is a dealer, and will include your name on his mailing list if requested to do so.

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EDITORIAL

Once again we come to the end of another year and subscriptions are due. I am pleased to be able to tell you that there is no increase for 1995, and this despite the extra pages included last year in order to publish Anthony Goodbody's articles on Central American railways. There do however remain some subscriptions outstanding and if your is one we would be pleased to hear from you.

The next date for your diary is 11 March 1995 at the Victory services Club, Seymour Street, Marble Arch, London. This will be an all day event specialising on the American Bank Not Company and its issues in South and Central America, including the South American Bank Note Company which was a subsidiary of ABNCo. It is hoped that everyone will have some stamps in this category and the object is to see the extent of the printing variations. In addition a discussion will be held on the programme we will provide at MIDPEX 1995 (see next paragraph) where we will have a golden opportunity to recruit new blood.

In an effort to publicise our Society and its groups we have affiliated to the new ABPS. As a result of that we are taking tables and display frames at the forthcoming exhibition "Midpex 1995" described as "The Exhibition for National/Specialist Philatelic Societies" to be held on Saturday 10 June 1995, at the Midlands Sports Centre for the Disabled, Tile Hill Coventry. Over 30 dealers will be there, all of whom will know the names of the Societies displaying and will bring the appropriate stock. Entrance will be free to you as a member of our club and may well be free to all. We have decided to take three tables so that each group and the Spanish Main will have five frames each for displays. For our part, we already have displays of Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Mexico and could really do with two more from other Republics. If you would care to volunteer please contact Dick Saundry. Certainly Dick and I will be there and we look forward to meeting as many of you as possible on the day. If you would care to volunteer a display for the Spanish Main frames please contact Brian Moorhouse.

☐ If this box is ticked our records show that you have yet to renew your subscription for 1995. If we have made an error, please let us know.

And finally may I take this opportunity to wish all of you

A Very Merry Christmas

and

a Prosperous New Year

mpb

AN INTERESTING CUBAN FIRST FLIGHT CACHET FOR A FLIGHT THAT NEVER TOOK PLACE!

by DR RICHARD H SAUNDRY

The flight of 10 October 1927 between Key West, Florida and Havana, Cuba was arguably one of the most significant flights ever performed by Pan American Airways. The very survival of PanAm is now thought to have depended on the successful outcome of this flight, and one can only theorise how different would have been the subsequent history of American, and consequently world airmail services without the influence of this major US airline.

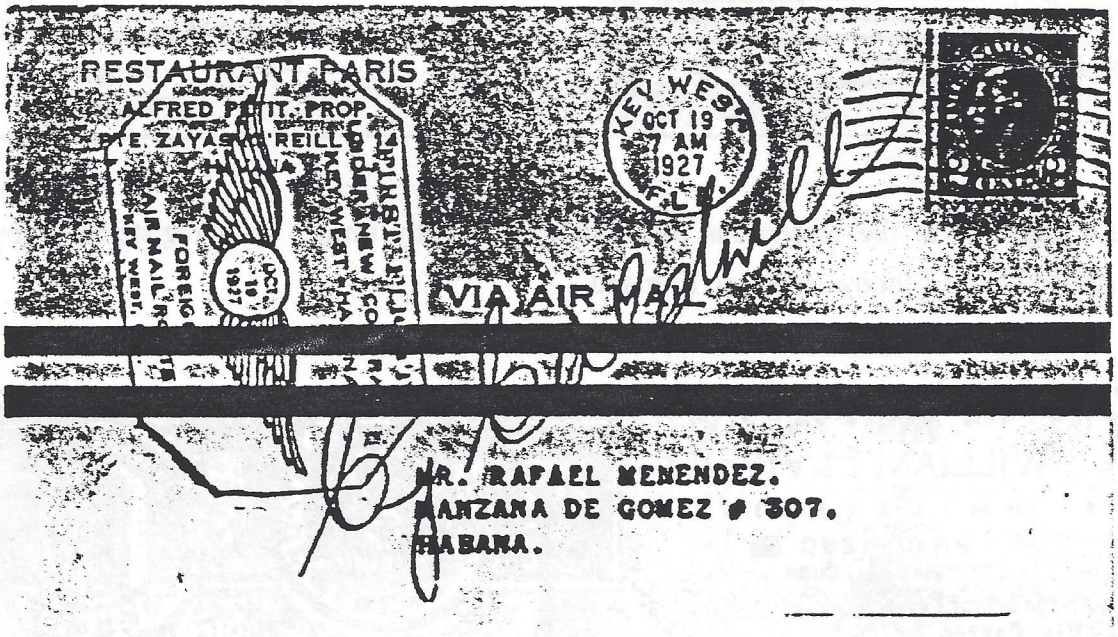
Briefly, PanAm had been founded as a "paper company" on 8 March 1927. The ultimate success of any airline depended on securing lucrative airmail contracts and PanAm was to be no exception. The President of PanAm, Juan Trippe, was both an astute and far-seeing individual who dreamt of operating an airmail network throughout South America. Ultimate success depended upon implementing the important airmail link between Florida and Cuba. He correctly argued that most subsequent air services from the USA to South America would have to proceed via the Florida-Cuba link and having secured this first step PanAm would have the decided advantage when vying with competitor airlines for airmail countries. Trippe visited Cuba and managed to persuade the Cuban President of the practicability of PanAm operating a Cuba-USA airmail service. Having secured a Cuban postal contract he then approached the US Post Office seeking the much more lucrative US mail contract, US foreign Air Mail (FAM) Route 4, which was in abeyance following the demise of the original contractors, Florida West Indies Airways, who had operated the route the winter 1920-21. The vital contract was awarded *BUT* PanAm were obliged to deposit $25,000 with the US Government which would be forfeit in the event that PanAm had not introduced the projected service by 19 October.

Incredibly PanAm had not even any aircraft of their own and all their hopes for successful inauguration of the service by the appointed date depended upon availability of aircraft ordered by them from the manufacturers. It was the same old story. By the 19 October 1927 deadline PanAm had not taken delivery of any aircraft, the service was not going to be started in time, and PanAm were about to sink without trace. In preparation for the promised service something of the order of 30,000 letters in seven sacks with a total weight of 251 lbs had already been delivered in Key West from New York on the "Havana Special" organised by the Florida East Coast - Atlantic Coast Line Railroads.

PanAm were desperate. Then, incredibly, a stroke of luck and PanAm were up and running. A small but very effective airline, the West Indian Aerial Express (WIAX), organised by the

American aviator Basil L Rowe, served the needs of the sugar plantations in the Dominican Republic and already operated successful air mail and freight services between the Dominican Republic and Haiti. At the eleventh hour, as it were, a Fairchild FC-2 Float Plane, "La Nina", arrived in Key West en route from the manufacturers for delivery to Rowe's company. A deal was struck on the spot with the Nina's pilot, Cy Caldwell, to lease the planes services to PanAm and fly the mails to Havana. Probably in view of what later transpired between PanAm and WIAX this charter flight was undertaken without WIAX official sanction. The 1 hr. 20 min. flight was successfully completed, arriving at Havana at 9.25 a.m.. As far as the US authorities were concerned PanAm had arranged delivery of the airmails by 19 October and did not lose their deposit. The rest is history. PanAm soon had planes of their own and went from strength to strength building a remarkable empire. Many competitor airlines went to the wall or were being absorbed into PanAm. WIAX was one of the latter, being taken over by PanAm November 1928. Rowe subsequently had a distinguished career as a PanAm test pilot.

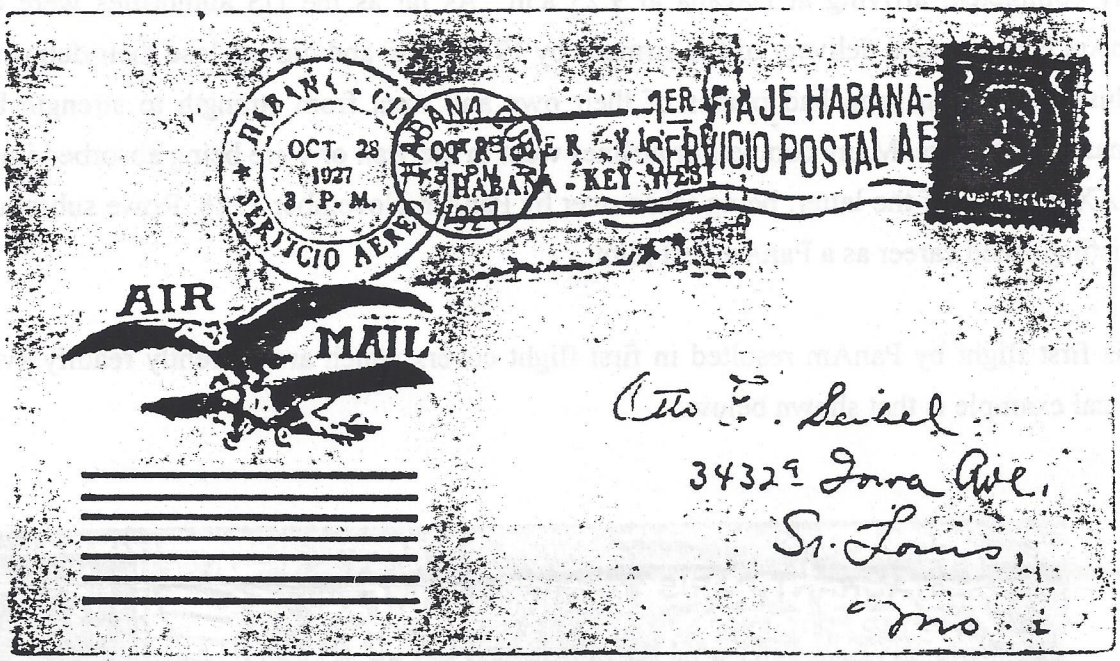
This first flight by PanAm resulted in first flight covers which are currently readily available. A typical example is that shown below.



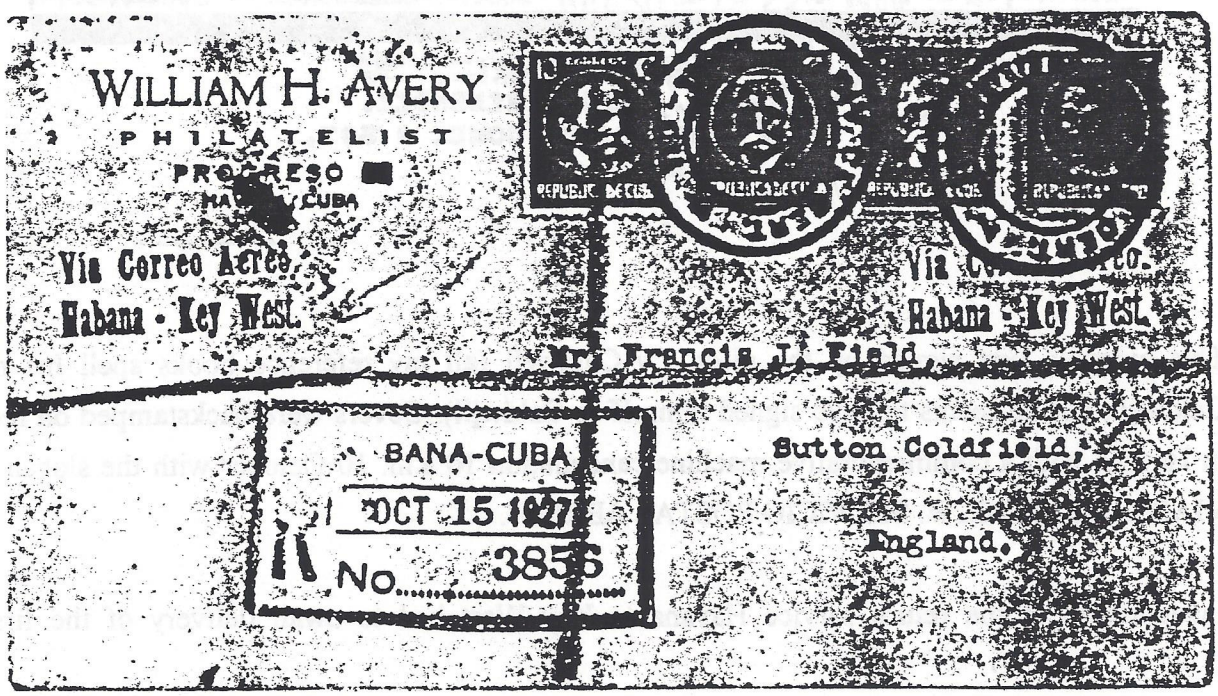
This example was signed by the pilot, Cy Caldwell (all my reference books spell his name Caldwell, but he seems to have signed himself as Caldwill). Covers were backstamped on receipt in Havana with a commemorative machine cancellation 10 a.m. 10 October with the slogan "1er VIAJE HABANA-K.W. SERVICIO POSTAL AEREO".

Inauguration of the return service Havana to Key West had to await delivery of the first of

PanAmerican's own planes. Thus the first flight from Cuba was not completed until 29 October. All Cuban covers were dated 28 October, with the adhesives cancelled with the same slogan machine canceller as used to backstamp the mails that arrived in Cuba on the 19th, plus a purple commemorative cachet provided by the Cuban Post Office. This time the pilot was PanAm's own Capt. Ed. Musick and all of the covers that I have seen seem not to have been backstamped by the US Post Office. Such covers, like the one below, are readily found.



This brings me to the reason for this article. I recently turned up a registered Cuban cover, illustrated below, sent by airmail to England.



Nothing could be more philatelically contrived than this cover as it bears the corner card (as our American friends call it) of William H Avery, a philatelist in Havana, who sent the letter to Francis J Field, the well-known British aerophilatelic dealer in Sutton Coldfield. It was probably posted in Havana to be taken on the return first flight Havana to Key West which we can assume Mr Avery thought would take place any date between 15th and 19th. The stamps to total 18 cts. are cancelled with an undated double circular "DIV. DE. CERT./HABANA-CUBA" which is struck in black ink, the registration handstamp being struck in blue with the registry number 3856 in green What is most interesting is that in addition to these post office markings are two strikes of a two-line cachet "Via Correo Aereo/Habana-Key West." struck with apparently the same ink as used to cancel the stamps. The cover arrived in England 31 October (British postmarks on back at both Birmingham and Sutton Coldfield). Cuban philatelic matters are somewhat outside my area of expertise but this cover seems to me to be genuine and to have travelled the posts. I concluded, however, it could never have been flown. If it had done so it would have attracted US transit date stamps. The English date stamps suggest it was sent by steamer to England. I guess the Cuban Post Office being in possession of a registered cover and perhaps not realising, this was to be an aerophilatelically-contrived collector's cover, as soon as the projected return flight was aborted thought it their duty to expedite it by sea to England. To me the great interest of this cover lies in the two-line cachet. I am convinced it must have been applied by the Cuban Post Office and not privately done by Avery. If this is the case this is probably the first report of this cachet. Can any of our readers confirm this? Ultimate proof of Post Office origin of the cachet depend upon confirmation through additional registered items not manufactured by Avery.

Continued from page 340

The Central American mail courier carried the mail bags, of course, but he was also furnished with a 'Parte' or official notice to facilitate and record his travel. On this document was written his name, date and hour of departure, and the money he carried. When the carrier arrived at each destination, the 'Parte' was annoted to list the hour of his arrival, any events which occurred during the trip, and the hour of his departure. This mechanism is described in some detail in the Honduras Postal Decree of August 1, 1856.

Page 340 illustrates the front and back sides of a 'Parte', issued in the name of Bernabe Molina, Postmaster General of Honduras, for a mail trip beginning on December 24, 1866 at Comayagua, Honduras, and continuing to Tegucigalpa (December 26, 1866), and Nacaome (December 29, 1866) and arriving at La Union, El Salvador (December 31, 1866). The carrier was Pedro Castillo. The return trip commenced January 2, 1867, and is documented on the same Parte. The postmark or seal of each postal office was applied to validate the newly added information. The postmaster at La Union, Salvador, noted for example, that the courier stayed for a full day to wait for incoming steamship mail

SOME CENTRAL AMERICAN PREPHILATELIC PAPER PARAPHERNALIA

by LEO J HARRIS

When one collects prephilatelic mail from the Central American countries there is more for a postal historian to consider than simply postmarks and postal rates. This short article will be devoted to a glimpse of the prephilatelic paraphernalia which was crucial to the carrying of the mail.

Carriage of the mails in Spanish Colonial and Central American Federation times, that is, prior to about 1839, was a unified matter with a single postal administration. After each country took charge of its own postal system, however, each issued its own laws, decrees, or regulations. However, the actual practices of these countries remained very similar for a number of years, and as a practical matter mail could be sent prepaid or collect between each of Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua and Salvador well into the philatelic era.

In Costa Rica's Decree No.XXII of December 10, 1839, that country's postal system was formally reestablished. In the paragraphs of that Decree which concerned the dispatch of mail, it was provided that letters were to be taken out of the drop box or other container in which they were placed by the correspondents, and stamped with the "marquilla" or postmark of the post office concerned. They were then to be sorted, and a listing of letters for each destination was prepared. That list was enclosed in the mail bag with the sorted letters. What did these lists look like?

These lists or 'way-bills' were of a fairly summary nature. Shown on the next page is a domestic Costa Rican way-bill from San Jose to Heredia, dated November 28, 1844. The column at the right lists the originators of the mail, which at the time were mostly governmental officials, and the columns at the right are headed by six letters. These letters mean, respectively, 'F' postage paid; 'S; postage unpaid; 'O' official mail, postage free; 'E' parcels; 'I' printed matter; and 'T' totals. This particular way-bill lists the carriage of three pieces of mail.

Way-bills in Republican Central America were also sent between the postal administrations of neighbouring countries. The second way-bill on the next page is from Nueva Segovia, Nicaragua, to Comayagua, Honduras, dated June 4, 1866. This way bill lists the carriage of a single letter and seven items of printed matter. The fancy, framed 'OCOTAL' is, incidentally, a recently discovered prephilatelic postmark for Nicaragua. The postmarks of the originating office were normally applied to the document.

SEÑOR ADMINISTRADOR DE Managua

Con el del dia dirijo á U. la siguiente correspondencia

	F	S	D	E	I	T
De la Camara de Representantes para						
Del Senado para						
Del Gobierno para						
De la Corte para						
De la Intendencia para						
De la Contaduria para						
Del Juzgado de Hacienda para						
De la Administracion principal para						
Del Gefe politico para						
Del Juzgado para						
Del Cura para						
De la Direccion de Estudios para						
De la Direccion de caminos para						
De la Comandancia para						
De Particulares para						

Receptoria de S. JOSÉ Abril 25 de 1861.

REPUBLICA DE NICARAGUA.

Señor Administrador de correos de Leon y Occidente

Con el del dia dirijo á U. la correspondencia siguiente.

CERTIFICADOS.	SENC.	DUPL.	TRIP.	PGOS	VALOR.	TOT.
	De particulares					
	De otras oficinas					
	Franquicia de oficio					
	Id. para empleados					
	Id. de particulares					
	Id. para I					
	Imperiales					7/8

ENCOMIENDAS Administracion de correos de Nueva Segovia

COSTA Junio 4 de 1866

Administradora

BERNABE MOLINA

ADMINISTRADOR GENERAL DE CORREOS DE LA

REPUBLICA DE HONDURAS.

Parte de esta Administracion para [illegible]

[illegible]

De cuya entrega, con expresion del dia y hora en que se efectuare, se asentará razon por los respectivos administradores á cuyo cargo corre, haciéndolo igualmente la en que este despacho; y al efecto que se le dé curso tambien al número de encomiendas que acompaña abajo de [illegible]

El correo que entrará en el puerto, no será habilitado en esta oficina hasta que la presente

PORTANTO de parte del Excelentísimo Señor Presidente de la República de Honduras, se previene, y de la mia se ruego y encargo á todos los Administradores de correos, Postores y demas de mayores y honorarios por donde transitare, le den curso expedito, para hacer cumplidamente el servicio de la República, y que exhibiendo este parte no se le ponga embarazo por ningun agente

Dado en Comayagua, á [illegible] de Abril de 1866

Despachado á las [illegible] de la mañana del mismo dia [illegible]

El conductor [illegible]

ENCOMIENDAS

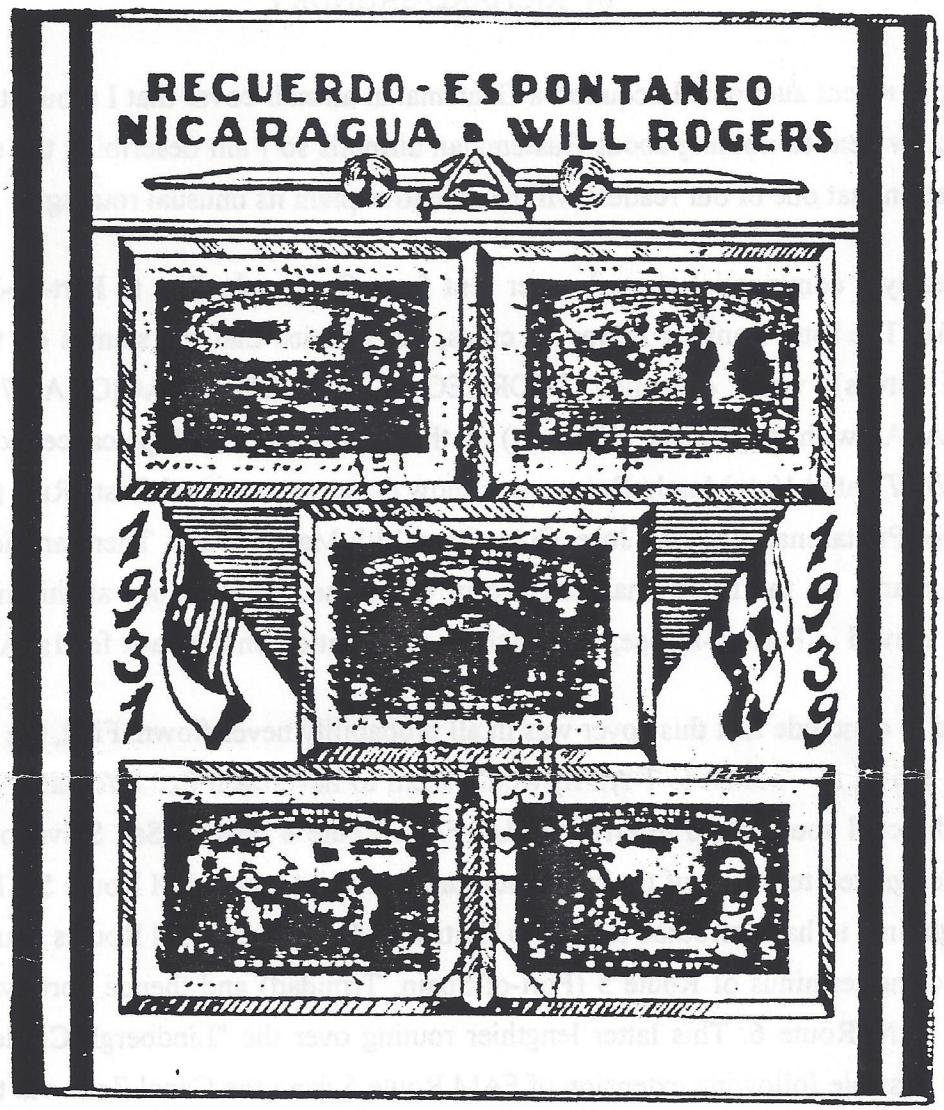
[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

THE WILL ROGERS COMMEMORATIVES

by LIONEL WARD



The writer and humorist Will Rogers visited Managua in 1931 and a series of commemorative stamps were issued in his honour during 1939. Rafael Gonzalez, one-time chief of the airmail section of the Managua post office, and a part time stamp dealer, in collaboration with other perpetrators, prepared a bogus "Will Rogers/1939" overprint which was applied to many of the then current postage and airmail stamps. In addition, the souvenir card with the Will Rogers commemorative stamps, and the so-called "8th Anniversary of the Earthquake postmark" (which was among those seized from the home of Ricardo Contreras Castillo) was fabricated by Gonzalez. As legitimately applied, the postmark was in blue; it is in violet on all fabrications, such as the sheet above. To increase the salability of the cards, the reverse side has applied the official "Direccion General de Communicaciones/Managua" handstamp of the post office. I would like readers to be aware of this should any of this material surface after hibernation.

AIRMAIL FROM GUATEMALA TO HAITI VIA COSTA RICA

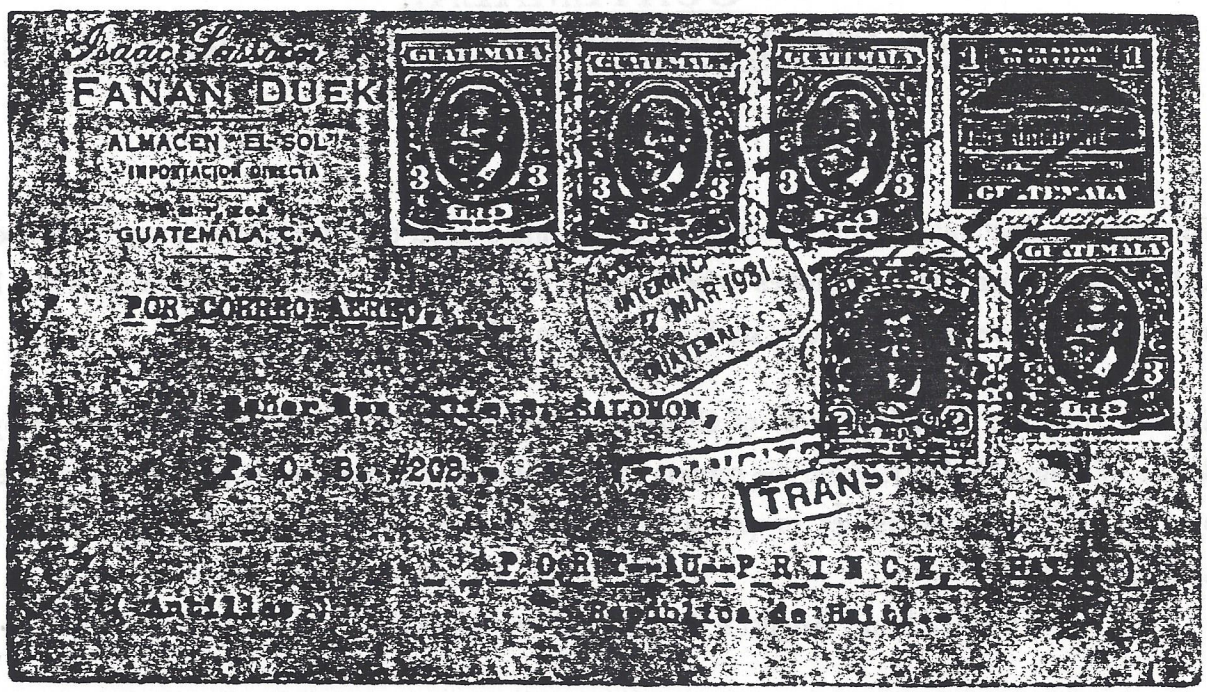
by RICHARD SAUNDRY

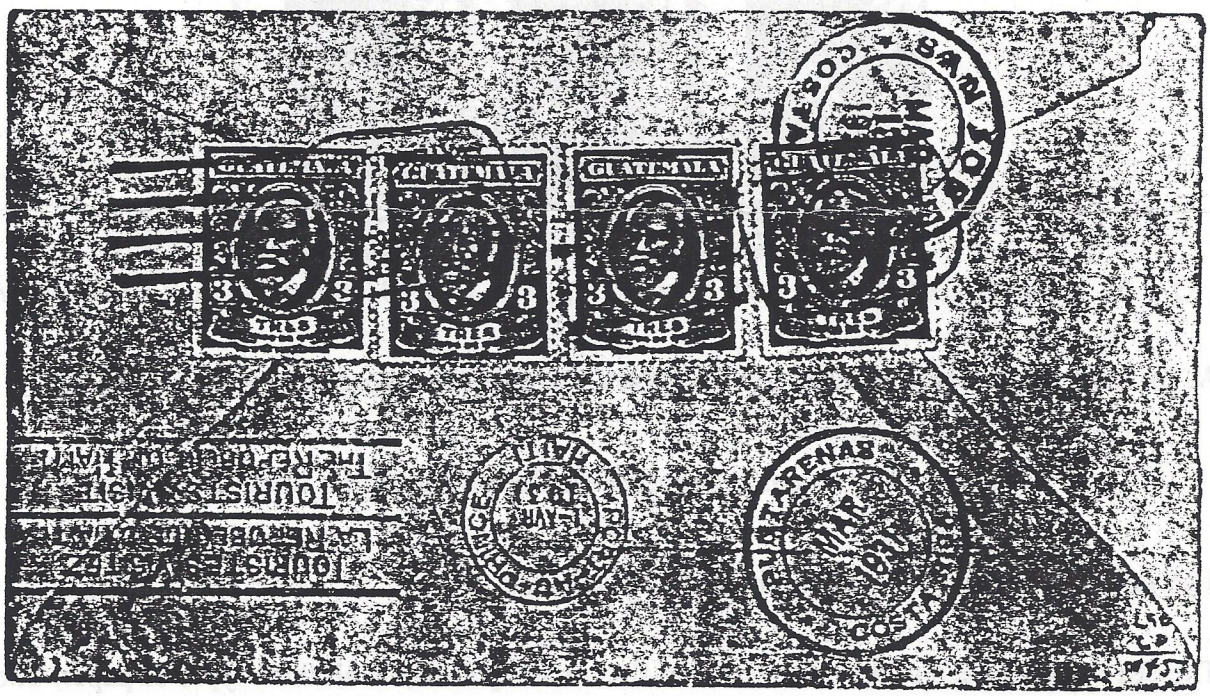
At one of our recent auctions I acquired a Guatemalan airmail cover that I thought was a bit of an oddity. I know next to nothing about Guatemalan airmails so I am describing the cover here with the expectation that one of our readers will be able to explain its unusual routing

It is apparently a commercial airmail cover sent from Guatemala City to Port-au-Prince, Haiti, 7 March 1931. The total franking is/was 27 ctvos, but I notice that the stamps on the front of the cover (15 ctvos) were cancelled "CORREO AEREO/INTERNACIONAL/7 MAR 1931/ GUATEMALA" with the balance (12 ctvos) on the back of the envelope cancelled with the same postmark, *BUT* dated 10th March. Datestamps show the cover transited Costa Rica (undated March postmark for Puntarenas, and San Jose, Costa Rica 13th March 1931). There are additional boxed "Transito" marks on the front, characteristic of those used in San Jose at this time. The cover apparently arrived in Port-au-Prince, viz. machine cancellation on the back for 1st April.

I am forced to conclude that this cover was in all probability never flown. First, the time span from sending to arrival (10 March to 1 April) would seem to have been extraordinarily long, even if it had been directed southbound in error via US FAM Route 8 beyond San Salvador. (since 3 July 1930 the designated terminus of the route, but junction point with FAM Route 5). There was more than enough time to have rerouted it back to Haiti via Miami over FAM Routes 5 and 6, or equally by flying to the terminus of Route 5 (Port-of-Spain, Trinidad) and thence northwards directly to Haiti over FAM Route 6. This latter lengthier routing over the "Lindbergh Circle" had recently been made possible following extension of FAM Route 5 from the Canal Zone via the North Coast of South America completed 10 February. Secondly, the Puntarenas transit postmark suggests the cover arrived there by steamer (not an Intermediary airmail stop at this time), and I note the San Jose postmark is the "normal duty" postmark, not the airmail postmark.

Beyond this I have no idea why this cover was apparently not flown. Since the cover is without contents we can only guess what its weight might have been. I note the Guatemalan airmail rate (as advertised 1930 in the memorandum postal) to Haiti was 23 ctvos per 10 g. I guess we have to add to this surface postage which I am guessing was the same as the Guatemalan domestic postage (UPAE regulations) i.e. 3 ctvos. Thus a total franking of 27 ctvos was about right for the then current airmail rate. Of course, if the letter exceeded 10 g it would have been hopelessly under-franked and thus have gone via surface means.





My guess is the cover was originally accepted by the Guatemalan Post Office for airmail to Haiti, 7th March, franked 15 ctvos, but subsequently found to have insufficient postage. The senders "corner card" would have allowed the Post Office to obtain from the sender additional moneys to increase the postage to 27 ctvos and send it 12th March. If this is a plausible scenario why did it apparently not get flown? After all if it had been re-examined by the Post Office and a further sum of money obtained from the sender, you would at least now expect correct postage for the requested airmail service. Perhaps our readers can explain this cover and why the Costa Rica routing?

GUATEMALA:
MODERN ISSUES REQUIRE CLOSE SCRUTINY

by CÉCILE GRUSON

This issue is Guatemala's first in sixteen months, and a good example of the many paper, colour and sometimes perforation varieties to be found on all the issues of the past few years. A UV lamp has become a necessity to properly study contemporary Guatemalan stamps.

Sponsored by the Orchids Society of Guatemala, the printing of this issue was authorised by the decree of August 6, 1991. From the reports that we have, it has been ready for issue since the end of 1992. Fifteen other issues or projects are said to be held up for lack of funds or issue authorisation!

Date of Issue; August 9, 1994 Quantity printed; 1 million per value.

Q. 0.50 *Enciclia Cocheata* Q. 1.00 *Enciclia Vitellina* Q. 2.00 *Odontoglossum Uroskinneri*

As for most of the issues of these past few years, there are thee types of paper:-

- non-fluorescent
- lightly fluorescent (sometimes the fluorescent matter looks like fibres)
- fluorescent

The yellow colour can be fluorescent or non-fluorescent.

The **50c** has only been seen so far with non-fluorescent yellow, on all three types of paper. The **Q.1** has the yellow always fluorescent and exists on all three types of paper. The **Q.2** is recorded on non and low fluorescent paper, with the yellow colour fluorescent or non-fluorescent. I cannot guarantee at this point to have quoted all the varieties extant. From the marginal inscriptions, it appears that at least the 50c was printed in two runs, but I have nor had a chance to examine full sheets to illustrate these differences.

The series comprises two further values, a **20c** and a **Q.1.50**, which will be issued at a later date. We have heard that the head of the Philatelic Department refused the 20c denomination because the printing showed marked colour variations. The 20c value will only be issued in uniform colours. Can you add to the above list?